

REMARKS

In view of the above amendment, applicant believes the pending application is in condition for allowance. Claims 2-10, 12-14, and 18-24 are now present in this application, of which claims 2, 6, 12, and 13 are independent. By this amendment, claims 11, and 15-17 have been canceled without prejudice or disclaimer, claims 2, 6, 12-14, and 18-20 have been amended, and claims 21-24 have been added.

Reconsideration of this application, as amended, is respectfully requested.

Allowable Subject Matter

The Examiner states that claims 2-10, 12, 13, 15, and 16 would be allowable if rewritten in independent form.

Applicants thank the Examiner for the early indication of allowable subject matter in this application. Objected-to claims 2, 6, 12, and 13 have been rewritten into independent form, and should therefore be allowed. Also, claims 3-5 and 7-10 depend from one of independent claim 2 and 6, and are therefore allowable based on their dependence from claim 2 or 6, which are believed to be allowable.

Rejection Under 35 U.S.C. § 102

Claims 11, 14, and 17-20 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by Valent. This rejection is respectfully traversed.

A complete discussion of the Examiner's rejection is set forth in the Office Action, and is not being repeated here.

While not conceding the appropriateness of the Examiner's rejection, but merely to advance prosecution of the instant application, Applicants respectfully submit that independent claims 11 and 17 have been canceled, thus rendering a portion of this rejection under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) moot. Accordingly, reconsideration and withdrawal of this rejection are respectfully requested.

With regard to dependent claims 14 and 18-20, Applicants submit that these claims depend from one of independent claims 2 and 12, which are allowable for the reasons set forth above, and

therefore claims 14 and 18-20 are allowable based on their dependence from claim 2 or 12. Reconsideration and allowance thereof are respectfully requested.

Claims 21-24

Claims 21-24 have been added for the Examiner's consideration. Applicants submit that claims 21-24 depend from one of independent claims 6 and 13, and are therefore allowable based on their dependence from claim 6 or 13, which are believed to be allowable.

In addition, claims 21-24 recite further limitations which are not disclosed or made obvious by the applied prior art references.

Consideration and allowance of claims 21-24 are respectfully requested.

Additional Cited References

Since the remaining references cited by the Examiner have not been utilized to reject the claims, but have merely been cited to show the state of the art, no comment need be made with respect thereto.

CONCLUSION

All of the stated grounds of rejection have been properly traversed, accommodated, or rendered moot. Applicants therefore respectfully request that the Examiner reconsider all presently outstanding rejections and that they be withdrawn. It is believed that a full and complete response has been made to the outstanding Office Action, and as such, the present application is in condition for allowance.

If the Examiner believes, for any reason, that personal communication will expedite prosecution of this application, the Examiner is invited to telephone Chad D. Wells, Registration No. 50,875, at (703) 205-8000, in the Washington, D.C. area.

Prompt and favorable consideration of this Amendment is respectfully requested.

If necessary, the Commissioner is hereby authorized in this, concurrent, and future replies, to charge payment or credit any overpayment to Deposit Account No. 02-2448 for any additional fees required under 37 C.F.R. §§ 1.16 or 1.17; particularly, extension of time fees.

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Respectfully submitted,

By James T. Eller, Jr. #44,953

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